

## Management Area Standards

### Introduction

The Gallatin National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) defines “standard and guideline” as “an indicator or outline of policy or conduct.” The Forest Service interprets and applies “standards” of the Forest Plan as binding limitations on management activities that are designed to maintain a specified minimum level of resource protection. The above monitoring requirement is intended to assess the performance of Gallatin Forest management in the planning and implementation of activities, consistent with Forest Plan standards. Forest-wide standards can be found on pages II-14 through II-28 of the Forest Plan. Management area standards can be found on pages III-2 through III-72. This monitoring item is measured by the number of project-specific Forest Plan amendments made to forest-wide and management area standards since 1987.

### Monitoring Results

Forest Plan Standard	Number of Amendments
Forest-wide standard 4(1). The Gallatin National Forest has developed visual quality objectives (VQOs), ---which provide guidance for all landscape altering activities. Reference maps of VQOs are located at Forest offices. --- If the QO cannot be met the Forest Supervisor must approve the exemption in the decision notice.	5
Forest-wide standard 6a(4). The 1982 Elk Logging Study Annual Report contains procedures for analyzing elk habitat security as it is affected by timber harvest and road construction activities. An “elk effective cover” analysis based on this report will be conducted for timber sales and effective cover ratings of at least 70 percent will be maintained during the general hunting season.	6
Forest-wide standard 6c(2). In order to achieve size and age diversity of vegetation, the Forest will strive to develop the following successional stages in timber compartments containing suitable timber: Grass-forb = 10%; Saplings = 10%; Pole = 10%; Mature = 10%; Old growth = 10%.	7
MA 13 Standard, page III-41. Maintain a minimum of 30% of each timber compartment in old growth emphasizing by priority Douglas-fir, whitebark pine and wet subalpine fir community types.	1
Forest Plan Amendment 19. Within bear management subunits, there will be no increase in open or total motorized access route density from the current level and that there will be no decrease in the amount of core area from the current level.	1
USFWS Bioogical Opinion (FP, page H-8). Re-entry (for timber harvest) into a drainage should not occur unless 40% or more can be maintained in cover (20% hiding cover, 10% thermal cover, and an additional 10% in hiding or thermal cover).	1

The forest-wide and management area (MA) standards were all site-specifically amended in conjunction with timber harvest decisions. The visual quality standard (forest-wide standard 4(1)) was amended with the decisions for the Mill-Emigrant Timber Sales (7/90),

the Thompson Creek Fire Recovery Project (3/92), the South Portal Timber Sale (5/99), the Bozeman Creek Visual Rehabilitation Project (6/95) and the Bridger Bowl Master Development Plan (4/05). The standard was also proposed for amendment with the West Lake Timber Sale but this decision was withdrawn.

The “elk effective cover” standard [forest-wide standard 6a(4)] was amended with the decisions for the Mill-Emigrant Timber Sales (7/90), the Moose/Swan/Tamphery Timber Sale (3/99), the Taylor Fork Timber Sale (10/00), the Appaloosa Timber Sale (12/98), the Darroch-Eagle Creek Timber Sale (4/04), and the Bridger Bowl Master Development Plan (4/05). The standard was also proposed for amendment in the Hyalite Timber Sale, the Hyalite II Timber Sale, and the West Lake Timber Sale but these decisions were reversed in court or withdrawn.

The vegetative diversity standard (forest-wide standard 6c(2)) was amended for the Taylor Fork Timber Sale (10/00), the Moose-Swan-Tamphery Timber Sale (3/99), the South Portal Timber Sale (5/99), the Appaloosa Timber Sale (12/98), the Iron Mountain Timber Sale (3/99), the Darroch-Eagle Creek Timber Sale (4/04), and the Bridger Bowl Master Development Plan (4/05). It was also proposed for amendment with the West Lake Timber Sale but this proposal was withdrawn.

The old growth standard (MA 13) was amended for the South Plateau Timber Sale (5/89). It was also proposed for amendment with the West Lake Timber Sale but this proposal was withdrawn.

The amendments made for Amendment 19 direction and to the thermal cover standards provided in the USFWS Biological Opinion were made in conjunction with the Taylor Fork Timber Sale.

Based on the lack of project-specific amendments for decisions on other management activities it can be concluded that forest-wide and management area standards, other than the ones above, are being followed as directed in planning and design of those projects. This includes resource projects in recreation, wildlife and fish, range, minerals, lands, special uses, cultural resources, facilities, water and soils, wilderness, and fire and fuels.

There have been other amendments to the Forest Plan but these were done for reasons other than the inability to meet the standards with a proposed project. A brief description of these amendments is provided below.

#### **Forest Plan Management Area Map, amended 3/20/90**

This amendment changed 255 acres of MA 8, 644 acres of MA 11, 149 acres of MA 12, and 425 acres of MA 17 around Hodgman Canyon and Leverich Creek along the east face of Hyalite Canyon to MA 5. This was done to recognize the heavy recreation use the area receives and emphasize the natural attractiveness of this landscape.

#### **Wild and Scenic Rivers, amended 7/2/93**

This amendment added segments of the Boulder River and the Clarks Fork River to the Forest Plan list of eligible rivers for Wild and Scenic classification (page II-28 and J-1). It also added a forest-wide goal and standard to manage eligible segments consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and Forest Service Handbook direction.

#### **Big Game Cover Definitions, amended 2/26/93**

This amendment added to and modified Forest Plan definitions of cover and security in the glossary to better reflect these as habitat components needed by big game.

#### **Snags and Down Woody Debris, amended 2/26/93**

This amendment changed Forest Plan management direction on pages VI-39 and A-13 for retention of snags and down woody debris during timber harvest activities. The purpose of the amendment was to provide more concise direction to maintain sufficient habitat for cavity nesting birds, snag-dependent species, and other wildlife.

#### **Water Quality Analysis Procedures, amended 2/26/93**

This amendment deleted the management area standard in MAs 8, 10, 11, and 13 which stated “use the Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA) procedures to evaluate hydrologic conditions.” This standard was deleted because ECA procedures did not measure stream sedimentation which is of greater concern and more indicative of the effects of management actions on water quality.

#### **Grizzly Bear Road Density Standards, amended 2/20/96**

This amendment removed all direction for habitat effectiveness (road density) within the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (pages II-42, II-46, III-48, G-13 and G-22) as it relates to management of bear habitat and replaced it with US Fish and Wildlife recommendations to allow no increase in open motorized route density nor any decrease in core area. It should be noted that as of September 2006 the grizzly bear is proposed for de-listing and if that were to occur, this direction may again be amended.

#### **Research Natural Areas, amended 7/29/07**

This amendment reflects the establishment of seven designated Research Natural Areas (RNAs) and one Special Interest Area (SIA) on the Gallatin National Forest (MA 21, page III-62).

#### **Cooke City Mineral Withdrawal, amended 8/12/97**

This amendment changed all lands within the Cooke City Mineral Withdrawal area which were allocated to MA 24 (minerals emphasis) to MA 15 (wildlife/recreation emphasis). It also amended Appendix D of the Forest Plan to include this mineral withdrawal. The

mineral withdrawal was directed by the Clinton Administration and approved by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture.

#### **Montana-Dakota OHV Decision, amended 1/2001**

This amendment added direction to all Northern Region Forest Plans to eliminate wheeled motorized cross-country travel with a few exceptions. The exceptions include allowances for off-route travel for military, fire, search and rescue, law enforcement, by permit or for other official administrative business. It also allows cross-country travel to a campsite within 300 feet of roads and trails. It should be noted that as of September 2006 the Forest Service has proposed a plan for the management of travel across the Gallatin National Forest. This proposal would further restrict wheeled motorized travel to designated routes.

#### **Bridger Bowl Ski Area Management Area Adjustment, amended 5/18/05**

This amendment adjusted the delineation of 3 management areas adjacent to the Bridger Bowl Ski Area. This was done in conjunction the approval of a ski area master plan that allowed for expansion. In summary the amendment increased the land area within MA 2 by 287.8 acres, the land area within MA 11 by 12.7 acres, and the land area within MA 12 by 268.1 acres. Note that this was one of 4 amendments made to the Forest Plan in conjunction with the Bridger Bowl Master Development Plan approval. The other three are included and discussed with the table above.

#### **OTO Ranch Amendment, amended 1/27/06**

This was an amendment to the Gallatin National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan to include management direction for the 3,265-acre OTO Tract purchased from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in 1990. The amendment designated the OTO Tract as MA 1, 7, 14, and 26 commensurate with the intended human use and habitat characteristics. The MA descriptions and proposed allocations for the OTO Tract are as follows:

1. MA 1 - Developed recreation site/trailhead (about 2 acres)
2. MA 7 - Riparian area (unmapped)
3. MA 14 - Grizzly habitat/big game winter range (about 3,260 acres)
4. MA 26 - Administrative site (about 3 acres)